

Ron's Recommendations

As a convenience to those on the c-call, and so you don't have to wade through my lengthy memo to find them, I've copied below the five recommendations I propose to the Commission for further consideration..... Ron ...Ron Moody 109 Bach Ave Lewistown MT 59457 406-538-2698 couleeking@hotmail.com

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION I don't kid you that the following recommendations will "solve" our current problem. I offer them simply as some logical first steps we can take. A "solution" can only come from all of us deliberating together and agreeing what the Commission really is going to do to address its legal mandate:

#1 Most important recommendation of all - the Commission has to agree among ourselves that we establish the Commission as the go-to entity for the public, the Governor and/or other Departments who want to address State Library policymaking. The Librarian will play a key role but the Commission has to establish its own relationships. In terms of the Governor's office it is particularly important that the Commission establish a direct working relationship between the Commission Chair and/or Vice Chair and the Governor and his/her staff. Hal made it clear that they look at the State Library as being very important and they want this rapport. My perception right now is that the Commission exhibits a line-of-authority that is too unstructured, and which forces the Librarian to assume a quasi-statutory role that is not supported by the law at the same time she is not getting any real support from us in her attempt to perform this role. It's a classic caught-in-the-middle trap for her.

#2 The second recommendation I have is that the Commission needs to develop a by-law that can endure over time to impose more process and authority in the way we take actions - recommended by the staff or otherwise. If, for instance, we had simply had a rule that all such actions as the Digital Transition Plan must automatically be scheduled for public comment and user feedback this whole situation would have been forestalled. (Even though I see a silver lining in the form of a golden opportunity to correct our course - particularly while we have a Governor who is friendly to our values)

#3 Third, the language we use as a commission is important when we take action. We have to take ownership. We don't 'approve' an action proposed by the Librarian (as I recall our motion on the Plan was verbed). Instead, our motion should 'direct' the Librarian, or 'establish' the program, etc.

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#4 Fourth, the Commission Chair should be the press source for announcing any action taken by the Commission. This will relieve the Librarian from having to explain and justify (and take the blame for) actions she didn't control. It also lets the public and the press (And the Governor) know who to call if they are unhappy. The Commission has to start taking the flak for its actions. MOST IMPORTANT - in any public communication - we must take great care how we 'frame' our actions. Framing is the process by which we communicate to the audience how they should feel about our message regardless of the actual action the message reports. i.e.: 'Closing' a library is a frame - nobody likes for a library to close. 'Modernize' the Library is a contrasting frame that legitimately describes the same action - everybody likes to see a library modernize. Ergo, we have to place a lot more emphasis on how our words will make people feel even before we tell them what they need to know.

#5 Our handling of the press in regard to the Transition Plan should be treated as an educational opportunity. I think it's plain that we need improvement when we consider both our experience of this situation and the bad press of the ACLU program controversy a couple of years ago. There is no history in MSL for how to deal with sudden bad press - and it shows. Other agencies do it every day and we can quickly borrow some institutional knowledge. One Good First Step - every other Department head with which I'm familiar has a first-level buffer person between themselves and the press (a department spokesperson). We should draw on this lesson to ask the Budget Office to find us a half-FTE of new money to fund bringing Sara Groves on full time to serve this spokesperson function. This should be a topic of discussion at the earliest convenient Commission meeting.